

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 2

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Final Report

July 11, 2000

Visit Conducted on:

March 27-28, 2000

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New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

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Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU 2

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted in SAU 2 comprised of the following schools: Inter-Lakes Preschool Program at Inter-Lakes Elementary School, Inter-Lakes Elementary School, Sandwich Central School, Ashland Elementary/Middle School, Inter-Lakes Middle Tier (Grades 5-6 at Inter-Lakes Elementary School and Grades 7-8 at Inter-Lakes High School) and Inter-Lakes High School. The visiting team met on March 27-28, 2000 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the Special Education Director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via telephone. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the NH State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS PROGRAM APPROVAL: *Conducted on October 26-27, 1993*

After review of the previous program approval report, the materials submitted for the 2000 program approval, as well as visits to each of the schools in the SAU, it was determined that SAU 2 has made improvements in special education since their last program approval review. It was the consensus of the visiting team that there is a greater understanding and dedication to inclusion in the SAU than was observed during the previous program approval visit. Both general and special educators are working well together as a team, with collaboration and co-teaching occurring throughout the SAU. The visiting team also observed a stronger emphasis on smooth transitions between the schools within the SAU.

The one issue still requiring attention is the role of paraprofessionals in SAU 2. The program approval team observed that paraprofessionals are often assuming the responsibilities of a substitute teacher, especially when there isn't a special education secretary to support case managers with paperwork. The team highly recommends that the SAU clarify the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, and provide ongoing training in these areas to paraprofessionals and to the teaching staff.

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Throughout SAU 2 there is a commitment toward meeting the needs of students in an inclusive setting, and it is evident that the staff are dedicated, caring and child-centered. After visiting each of the schools within the SAU, the consensus of the program approval team was that the major issue of significance in special education programming is in the use of paraprofessionals as explained in Section II.

Another issue of significance is the lack of space, materials, and staffing for special education services at the High School. There is currently not enough space for related service providers to conduct evaluations and therapy, or enough materials for special education staff to carry out IEP goals. In addition, there is a need for additional special education teachers at the High School in order to provide the most appropriate services for students.

Paperwork issues need to be addressed through continued improvement in the use of special education paperwork, especially in documenting progress of IEP goals and providing this documentation to parents.

Overall, the program approval team would like to commend SAU 2 for its commitment and dedication to the needs of special education students, and for its efforts toward inclusion through collaboration and co-teaching.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS: SAU-WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Inter-Lakes special education director attempts to attend as many IEP meetings as possible at all four district schools.
- The Ashland special education director has worked hard to reorganize the special education paperwork system since joining the district in the fall.
- Parents are satisfied overall with special education services and the dedication of staff in the SAU.
- The special and general education staff in the SAU are dedicated to students' needs, are child-centered, and work well together as a team.
- The SAU contracts with consultants as necessary to support students' educational needs, especially if there are no professionals certified in a particular area within the SAU.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1119.04(a) The High School does not have adequate materials to provide services specified on students' IEPs.

Ed. 1119.06(b) The High School does not have sufficient space for the implementation of students' special education programs, especially for related service providers to conduct therapy and evaluations.

Ed. 1119.07(a-c) Paraprofessionals should not be designing programs or assuming the responsibilities of a teacher or substitute.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Be sure that all staff indicate their role on team meeting signature pages.
- Include more paraprofessionals as part of special education team meetings especially if they are 1-1 aides.
- Provide more training for paraprofessionals through ongoing meetings to review their roles and responsibilities, and staff development on special education issues.
- Encourage special education staff to pursue LD certification.
- Pursue the hiring of staff with LD and MR certification.
- Provide training to special education staff on writing measurable annual IEP goals.

- Document in student files that parents were given the IEP progress report, such as a returned signed copy, or a copy of the cover letter sent home with the progress report.

<p style="text-align: center;">Inter-Lakes Preschool Program (at Inter-Lakes Elementary School)</p>
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PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Preschool Program

COMMENDATIONS:

- The preschool program has a warm, friendly, supportive, and child-centered environment.
- There is a collaborative, team approach to providing related services to children.
- There were enriching teaching activities observed during "circle time" and all adults take part and participate.
- The integration in the preschool is very impressive where children of different abilities are learning and working together.
- The preschool related service providers go to the community preschools to offer services, maintaining strong communication between the community and the preschool.
- The preschool room is very bright, airy and colorful, and there appeared to be many age appropriate materials and toys available for the children.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1109.01(b) 2 files: The IEP annual goals were not measurable.

Ed. 1109.01(i) 2 files: There was no evidence of objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for IEP goals on at least an annual basis.

Ed. 1115.06 2 files: There was no evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets the criteria.

CFR#300.347(a)(7)(i) 3 files: There was no statement of how IEP progress will be measured.

CFR#300.347(a)(7)(ii) 3 files: There was no statement of how parents will be informed of their child's progress toward the annual IEP goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The preschool staff would benefit from the help of a special education secretary to help them keep paperwork up-to-date.
- Be sure that the preschool teacher is not acting in two roles at special education meetings (i.e., as both the regular classroom teacher and the special education teacher). Consider having a special or general education teacher from the kindergarten or elementary level attend preschool meetings, especially for students moving up to the elementary level the following year.

Sandwich Central School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The school has a very child-centered atmosphere.
- There is good parent involvement and volunteerism in the school.
- The special and general education staff work well together as a team, and are dedicated to providing educational support to all students.
- The school conducts creative "whole school" activities, such as "taking the whole school to the museum day" and "Read Across America - Cat in the Hat Day".

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.05(k) 1 file: The evaluation was not completed within 45 days.

Ed. 1107.07(c)(3) 1 file: There was no evidence that an LEA representative attended that determination of eligibility meeting.

Ed. 1107.08(e) 1 file: The LD summary report was not signed by all of the team members.

Ed. 1109.01(b) 1 file: The IEP annual goals were not measurable with benchmarks or objectives.

Ed. 1109.11 1 file: The IEP goals did not show the extent to which it is sufficient to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

Ed. 1115.06 1 file: There was no evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets the criteria.

Ed. 1119.07(a & b) Paraprofessionals should not be designing programs or assuming the responsibilities of a teacher or substitute.

CFR#300.347(a)(5)(i) 1 file: There was no indication of whether or not the student needed modifications in the administration of state or district-wide assessments.

CFR#300.347(a)(5)(ii)(A) 1 file: There was no indication of whether or not the student would participate in all or parts of state or district-wide assessments, and if so, why the test was not appropriate.

CFR#300.347(a)(5)(ii)(B) 1 file: There was no indication of how the student would be assessed.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider a different method of organization for students' files to facilitate the retrieval of paperwork, such as separate sections for evaluations, team meeting minutes, IEPs and progress reports.
- Add a line to special education paperwork or write into team meeting minutes an indication that parents received copies of their procedural safeguards, and evaluation summary report.
- Be sure that the student's SPEDIS number is on the IEP cover page.
- Document in student files that parents were given the IEP progress report, such as a returned signed copy, or a copy of the cover letter sent home with the progress report.

- Be sure that team members are indicating their role on team meeting signature pages.
- Encourage special education staff to pursue LD certification.

Inter-Lakes Elementary School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Resource Room 2) Modified Regular

COMMENDATIONS:

- The staff is friendly, pleasant, committed to inclusion, and dedicated to supporting students' educational needs.
- The school atmosphere is warm and child-centered, with students' work displayed throughout the building.
- The special education services offered to students are outstanding with wonderful options, such as related service providers working with students in the classroom.
- The special and general education teachers provide excellent inclusionary services through collaboration, communication, and co-teaching.
- The Student Services Room is a good option for children to get extra help on schoolwork, to stay in for recess to do work if needed and to act as an intermediary step for behavior issues prior to disciplinary action.
- A looping system is used in Kindergarten to Grade 1, and in the multiage classrooms.
- The classroom modifications on IEPs are well organized into categories, such as environmental, curriculum, presentation, and behavioral strategies.
- The school seems to have an adequate number of special education staff, related service providers and paraprofessionals.
- There is an excellent mentoring program with Plymouth State College where college students work in the classrooms 1-1 or in small groups with both special and general education students.
- The "Education by Design" program focuses on students' interests and works to instill a love of learning.
- The administration is enthusiastic and energetic.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

Ed. 1107.05(k) 1 file: The evaluation was not conducted within 45 days.

Ed. 1107.08(c) 1 file: There was no LD observation in the file.

Ed. 1107.08(d)(3 &4) 1 file: The LD summary report was missing the relevant behavior noted during the observation and the relationship of that behavior to the student's academic functioning.

Ed. 1109.01(a) 1 file: There was no evidence of how the disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

Ed. 1109.01(b) 3 files: The annual IEP goals were not measurable with benchmarks or objectives.

Ed. 1109.01(i) 2 files: There was no evidence of objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules on at least an annual basis.

Ed. 1109.04(a) 1 file: There was no evidence that parents were given a 10-day notice of the IEP meeting.

Ed. 1109.11 3 files: There was no evidence that parents are informed of progress on IEP annual goals at least as often as they are informed of their non-disabled children's progress.
3 files: The IEP progress reports do not show the extent to which it is sufficient to achieve the goals by the end of the year.

Ed. 1111.01 2 files: There was no evidence that the ESY process was completed by 4/30 or 60 days before starting.

Inter-Lakes Elementary School, Continued

Ed. 1115.06 2 files: There was no evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets the criteria.

Ed. 1123.05 2 files: There was no evidence that parents were given their annual notice of rights at the initial referral for evaluation, at each reevaluation or with each notification of an IEP meeting.

Ed. 1125.03 2 files: The written prior notice did not have a description of the evaluation procedures, tests, records and reports upon which the action was based.

1 file: The written prior notice did not have an explanation of why the local education agency proposed or refused to take this action.

CFR#300.346(a)(l)(ii) 2 files: There was no evidence that most recent evaluation results were considered.

CFR#300.346(a)(l)(iii) 2 files: There was no evidence that state or district-wide testing results were considered.

CFR#300.347(a)(4) 1 file: There was no statement of extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in regular classes.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider having one unified method for file organization so that all case managers use the same system (ex. organize by paperwork: IEPs, meeting minutes, etc.).
- A special education secretary would alleviate some of the paperwork workload, especially for case managers with teaching and testing responsibilities.
- Consider taking more extensive meeting notes so that a full explanation of the meeting's outcome is evident in the file.
- Document annual progress on state testing, CATs, classroom tests and teacher observations on the WPN and in meeting notes.
- Be sure that classroom observations are recorded and kept in student files, especially for LD students.
- Consider adding statements to your special education paperwork to show evidence that: parents had input into the development of the IEP; how the parent will be informed of IEP goal progress; the amount of time the student will spend in the general classroom with non-disabled peers; the evaluation criteria that will be used for IEP goal progress; whether or not transition services are needed; whether or not the student will participate in regular Physical Education or what modifications are needed; and that LRE was considered.
- Consider keeping documentation in special education students' files of the communication between teachers and parents, and between special and general education staff on behalf of student needs.
- Include more paraprofessionals at special education team meetings when appropriate.
- Provide increased time for joint planning team between special and general education staff.
- Paraprofessionals would benefit from training on their roles and responsibilities and on special education issues.
- Consider providing opportunities for building administrators to be more involved with the special education process (ex. as building LEAs).

Ashland Elementary/Middle School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The files were well organized with separate sections for paperwork.
- The staff is very child-centered, work well together as a team, and are dedicated to students' needs.
- It is evident that since the new special education director joined the Ashland school district this year, much work has been done to organize files and paperwork.
- The school nurse has a "lunch bunch" boys group and girls group for students to get together and talk informally about school and issues that are important to them.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

- Ed. 1107.02(b) 1 file: There was no evidence that parents were given written notice of the referral immediately.
- Ed. 1107.02(d) 2 files: There was no evidence that parents were given written notice of the disposition of the referral within 15 days of the initial referral.
- Ed. 1107.08(e) 1 file: The LD summary report was not signed by all of the team members.
- Ed. 1109.01(i) 1 file: There was no evidence of objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules on at least an annual basis.
- Ed. 1109.01(k) 2 files: There was no statement of parties assuming financial responsibility.
- Ed. 1109.04 1 file: There was no evidence that parents were given their procedural safeguards at each notice of an IEP meeting.
- Ed. 1109.11 1 file: There was no evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of the IEP goals.
- Ed. 1111.01 2 files: There was no evidence that ESY was considered.
- Ed. 1119.07 Paraprofessionals should not be assuming the responsibilities of a teacher or substitute.
- Ed. 1123.05 1 file: There was no evidence that parents were given their annual notice of rights at the initial referral for evaluation, at each notification of an IEP meeting, and at each reevaluation of the student.
- CFR#300.347(a)(4) 1 file: There was no explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the regular classroom.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consider documenting that parents have received copies of progress reports (ex., keep a copy of the cover letter sent home with the progress report in the student's file, or have parents sign a copy of the progress report to keep in the file).
- Be sure that all staff indicate their role on team meeting signature pages.
- Pursue the development of a full-time special educator position for the middle school level.
- Pursue the hiring of a special education secretary so that staff have more time for case management and paraprofessional supervision.
- Encourage special education staff to pursue LD certification.

- Pursue additional private office space for the special education director for private meetings with staff, and for confidential parent telephones calls/meetings.

Inter-Lakes Middle Tier
(Grades 5 & 6 - at Inter-Lakes Elementary School and Grades 7 & 8 - at Inter-Lakes High School)

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The Academic Management and Student Services Program offer good supports for students.
- There is a paraprofessional or special education teacher always present in each classroom at each grade level for student support.
- The special and general education staff work well together as a team.
- There is an emphasis on providing smooth transitions for students from the elementary level to Grades 5 & 6, and again to Grades 7 & 8 housed at the High School.
- The administration and staff are dedicated to the continual improvement of special education services.
- There is adequate training provided to general education teachers in special education issues.
- The school-wide behavior policy's effectiveness is evident at all grade levels.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

- Ed. 1107.08(e) 1 file: The LD summary report was not signed by all the team members.
- Ed. 1109.01(i) 1 file: There was no evidence of objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules on at least an annual basis.
- Ed. 1109.11 2 files: There was no evidence that parents are informed of progress on IEP annual goals at least as often as they are informed of their non-disabled children's progress.
1 file: There was no evidence of whether or not the IEP goals progress showed the extent to which it is sufficient to achieve the goals by the end of the year.
- Ed. 1111.01 1 file: There was no evidence that ESY was considered.
- Ed. 1115.06 1 file: There was no evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets the criteria.
- Ed. 1119.07(b) Paraprofessionals should not be assuming the responsibilities of a teacher or substitute.
- Ed. 1123.04(a)(7) There was no public listing of the names and positions of those employees who have access to personally identifiable information.
- Ed. 1125.04(3-4) 2 files: There was no written consent for placement.
- CFR#300.347(a)(7)(ii) 1 file: There was no statement of how progress on the IEP goals will be measured.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Provide more opportunities for paraprofessionals to be a part of special education team meetings, especially if they work with a student 1-1.
- Provide more training to paraprofessionals, both upon hiring and ongoing, in the areas of roles and responsibilities and special education issues.
- Consider the possibility of hiring an additional speech-language pathologist for the Middle Tier, a speech pathology assistant, or an interim speech-language pathology evaluator to alleviate the combined evaluation/therapy caseload of the current speech-language pathologist.
- Encourage special education staff to pursue LD certification.

- Consider documenting that parents have received copies of progress reports (ex., keep a copy of the cover letter sent home with the progress report in the student's file, or have parents sign a copy of the progress report to keep in the file).

Inter-Lakes High School

PROGRAM(S) VISITED: 1) Modified Regular 2) Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education department has developed a computer program, accessible by code only, to keep teachers up-to-date on special education students' current goals and modifications.
- The school is committed to an inclusive special education philosophy.
- The school facility is clean and attractive.
- The special and general education staff work well together as a team.
- The policy handbook of The school is well written and clear.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

- Ed. 1107.02(b) 3 files: There was no evidence that parents were given written notice of the referral immediately.
- Ed. 1107.02(d) 3 files: There was no evidence that parents were given written notice of the disposition of the referral within 15 days of the initial referral.
- Ed. 1107.03(a) 1 file: There was no LD certified teacher at the evaluation meeting.
- Ed. 1107.07(c) 3 files: There was no teacher certified in the area of suspected disability at the determination of eligibility meeting.
- Ed. 1109.01(b) 3 files: The annual goals were not measurable with benchmarks or objectives.
- Ed. 1109.01(c) 1 file: There was no explanation of the extent to which the child would participate in the regular classroom.
- Ed. 1109.01(g) 1 file: There was no duration of services listed on the IEP.
2 files: There was no frequency or location of services listed on the IEP.
- Ed. 1109.01(h) 1 file: There was no length of school year or day on the IEP.
- Ed. 1109.01(i) 2 files: There was no evidence of objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules on at least an annual basis.
- Ed. 1109.01(j) 2 files: There was no list of individuals or providers responsible for implementing goals on the IEP.
- Ed. 1109.01(m) 1 file: There was no statement as to why transition services are not needed and the basis on which it was determined.
- Ed. 1109.03(c) 2 files: There was no evidence that steps were taken to ensure that the student's interests were taken into account.
- Ed. 1109.04(a) 1 file: The 10-day notice of the IEP meeting did not include the purpose, time, location or invitees.
1 file: The 10-day notice of the IEP meeting did not include a list of those invited with knowledge or special expertise.

1 file: There was no evidence that procedural safeguards were given with the notice of the IEP meeting.

Inter-Lakes High School, Continued

- Ed. 1109.11 3 files: There was no evidence of regular and systematic monitoring of the IEP.
3 files: There was no evidence that parents are informed of progress on IEP annual goals at least as often as they are informed of their non-disabled children's progress.
- Ed. 1111.01 2 files: There was no evidence that ESY was considered.
- Ed. 1115.06 3 files: There was no evidence that LRE is determined annually and meets the criteria.
- Ed. 1119.04(a) The High School does not have adequate materials to provide services specified on students' IEPs.
- Ed. 1119.06(b) The High School does not have sufficient space for the implementation of students' special education programs, especially for related service providers to conduct therapy and evaluations.
- Ed. 1119.07(a-c) Paraprofessionals should not be designing programs or assuming the responsibilities of a teacher or substitute.
- Ed. 1123.04(a)(7) There was no public listing of the names and position of those employees who have access to personally identifiable information.
- Ed. 1123.04(a)(10) 3 files: There was no record of disclosure in the file.
- Ed. 1123.05 3 files: There was no evidence that the annual notice of rights was given at each notice of an IEP meeting or at the reevaluation of the child.
- Ed. 1125.03 2 files: The written prior notice did not contain all the required content.
- CFR#300.346(a)(1)(i) 1 file: There was no evidence that parental input and concerns were considered in the IEP development.
- CFR#300.346(a)(1)(ii) 2 files: There was no evidence that the most recent evaluation results were considered in the IEP development.
- CFR#300.346(a)(1)(iii) 1 file: There was no evidence that state or district-wide testing results were considered in the IEP development.
- CFR#300.347(a)(4) 2 files: There was no explanation of the extent to which the child will not participate with non-disabled peers in regular classes.
- CFR#300.347(a)(5)(i) 1 file: There was no explanation of needed modifications in the administration of state or district-wide assessments.
- CFR#300.347(a)(7)(ii) 2 files: There was no statement of how parents will be informed of their child's progress on IEP goals.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Explore the development of programming for EH students so that the High School will be prepared when/if that population enters.
- Consider offering opportunities for further instruction in math, reading and written expression for students with severe deficits in these areas.
- Pursue the hiring of additional special education particularly those with LD and MR certification.
- Provide training to staff on meeting the needs of diverse learners.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU # 2

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

<p style="text-align: center;">ADDENDUM JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</p>

SAU 2

NUMBER OF FILES REVIEWED: 1 FILE

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education director keeps a "comprehensive action plan" in the student's SAU file which documents the results of recent team meetings, the status of the student's progress in each area of service delivery, attendance history, conduct update, recent report cards, and teacher notes of progress in each of the student's classes.
- The file was very well organized and it was evident that the SAU is actively involved in the educational programming of court order placed students.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

- Ed. 1107.02(d) 1 file: There were not written consents to evaluate for all of the current evaluations in the file.
- Ed. 1109.01(k) 1 file: The Lake Grove at Maple Valley IEP did not have a statement of parties assuming financial responsibility.
- Ed. 1109.11 1 file: There was no evidence that the Lake Grove at Maple Valley IEP showed regular and systematic monitoring of each of the IEP goals.
- Ed. 1123.05 1 file: The file did not contain evidence that parents had received their most recent annual notification of rights.
- Ed. 1130.03(g) 1 file: There wasn't evidence in the file that the team had provided the court with a copy of the WPN 5 days prior to the placement hearing.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Continue to be sure that the private school's IEP/special education paperwork contains all of the required content.